

The ABC's of Viral Hepatitis

	Hepatitis A (HAV)	Hepatitis B (HBV)	Hepatitis C (HCV)
What is it?	HAV is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. It does not lead to chronic disease.	HBV is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. The virus can cause liver cell damage, leading to cirrhosis and cancer.	HCV is a virus that causes inflammation of the liver. This infection can lead to cirrhosis and cancer.
Incubation period (time from exposure to illness)	15 to 50 days Average 30 days	4 to 25 weeks. Average 8 to 12 weeks.	2 to 25 weeks. Average 7 to 9 weeks.
How is it spread?	Transmitted by fecal/oral route, through close person to person contact (changing diapers without good handwashing), anal-oral sex, or ingestion of contaminated food and water.	Contact with infected blood, seminal fluid, vaginal secretions, contaminated needles, including tattoo/body piercing tools. Infected mother to newborn. Human bite. Sexual contact.	Contact with infected blood, contaminated IV needles, razors and tattoo/body piercing tools. Infected mother to newborn. NOT easily spread through sex.
Symptoms	May have none, especially young children. Symptoms may include light stools, dark urine, fatigue, fever, and jaundice (yellow skin). Jaundice by age group: < 6yrs: < 10% 6-14 yrs: 40-50% > 14 yrs: 70-80%	May have none, especially young children. Some persons have mild flu-like symptoms, dark urine, light stools, jaundice, fatigue and fever. Jaundice by age group: < 5 yrs: < 10% ≥ 5 yrs: 30-50%	If have symptoms, similar as with HBV. Between 30 to 40% with acute HCV develop symptoms and 20 to 30% develop jaundice.
Percent who develop chronic disease	None	Varies by age of onset of infection. < 5 yrs: 30%-90% ≥ 5 yrs: 2%-10%	75%-85%

	Hepatitis A (HAV)	Hepatitis B (HBV)	Hepatitis C (HCV)
Treatment of chronic disease	Not applicable	Anti-virals with varying success. Therapy is expensive.	Interferon alone or in combination with ribavirin with varying success. Therapy is expensive.
Vaccine	Two doses of vaccine to anyone over the age of two. Vaccine is recommended for children who live in communities that have high rates of hepatitis A.	Three doses of vaccine to all children and high risk adults.	No vaccine available.
Who is at risk?	Household or sexual contact with an infected person or living in an area with HAV outbreak. Easily spread in daycares with diapered children. Travelers to developing countries, men who have sex with men, IV drug users.	Infant born to infected mother, having sex with infected person or multiple partners, IV drug users, health care workers, men who have sex with men, and hemodialysis patients.	Anyone who had a blood transfusion prior to 1992. Contact with infected blood or contaminated needles. Infants born to infected mother, and having multiple sex partners.
Prevention	Immune globulin (IG) within 2 weeks of exposure. Vaccination. Washing hands with soap and water after using the toilet. Use household bleach to clean surfaces contaminated with feces, such as changing tables. Safe sex.	Hepatitis B immune globulin (HBIG) after known exposure. Vaccination. Safe sex. Clean up blood with bleach and wear gloves. Do not share razors, toothbrushes, needles.	Clean up spilled blood with bleach and wear gloves when touching blood. Do not share razors, toothbrushes, or needles. Safe sex.